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Czech Republic

Biotechnology

Consumer Perceptions of Biotechnology

2003

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Report Highlights:

Czech consumers are neither for nor against biotechnology. Those that support it value the price competitiveness of biotech products. Consumers against biotechnology argue there is insufficient scientific evidence proving its safety. At present, retail chains are not willing to carry biotech labeled products for fear of losing customers. However, Czech scientists are working aggressively to promote the technology, and newspaper coverage is generally balanced.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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Czech consumers are neither for nor against biotechnology. According to a poll organized by the State Health Institute in September 2003, over 40% of people don't have enough information on biotech, so they do not have an opinion one way or another. The remaining 60% are divided into the following three groups: slightly over 20% don't have any concerns and would buy biotech products, slightly less than 20% would never consumer biotech products and roughly 19% don't care. This poll was conducted by face-to-face interviews with over 1,000 respondents, ages 15 to 79, throughout the country.

Consumers that are not afraid of biotech products and support biotechnology believe the biggest advantage is the lower price of these products. There are more women than men in this category.

Consumers that are against biotechnology usually have a higher education and are from Prague and Moravia. They argue that there are no long-term scientific results proving biotechnology to be safe. They also are concerned about cross-pollination, risk of allergies, and misuse of the science by multi-nationals driven by a profit motive.

Farmers in general support the technology as they see economic benefits in growing biotech crops. At present, no biotech crops are approved for growing in the Czech Republic, however, Bt corn is very close to being registered for commercial planting (after three years of field trials) by the Minister of Environment.

There are no food products labeled as containing biotech content, even though RR soya is approved for use in food products with a condition of labeling for content over 1%. At present, no retail chains want to carry biotech labeled products. The chains are concerned they will lose customers if they begin stocking biotech labeled products. Foodstuffs are regularly tested for biotech content

Czech scientists, ranking among the best in the region, are aggressively promoting biotechnology by disseminating information to the public. They produce documentaries, work with journalists, and have developed web pages (see: www.biotrin.cz as an example of such webpages).

Newspaper articles are generally neutral, presenting views from all sides including that of scientists, representatives of biotech multi-nationals, Greenpeace, and consumer organizations.